Those who travel in Southern Surinam may meet different Bush-Negro and Indian tribes. From the 17th century onwards many negro slaves escaped from the plantations in the coastal area of Surinam. Along the rivers in the interior they founded villages that are still existing today. The Aukaners or Djukas and the Bonnis or Aloekoes living along the Maroni River and its tributaries are descendants of those slaves. During their advance to the South the Bush-Negroes drove the original Indians further into the interior. Their cultures being fairly different the Wayana and Trio Indians and the Bush-Negroes mixed hardly at all.

The Wayanas and the Trios live in Southern Surinam and in Brazil. They have been in contact with civilisation for a long time. The cultures of these Indian tribes are quite similar, but their languages differ, although they are grammatically related. (4)

In literature as well as in popular language there is a legendary name: Wa/an' Xoe/e. The Wajari Koeles are described as uncivilised Indians, living between the Oelemari river and the Liti-nari river. (1)

According to AHLBRINCK (1) the last member of this tribe, a woman named MALAWNI, died in Cottica on the Lawa river in 1938. MALAWNI escaped after one of the numerous fights between the French goldraiders and the Wajari Koeles, and was abducted by the Bonnis when found along the Maroni Creek.

The Wajari Koeles are not the same people as the Wamas, who are described by AHLBRINCK. The Wamas are probably identical to the stone age Akurio Indians contacted by the author of this report.*

* The author is making a pedological-geological study of the river valleys in Eastern Surinam and adjoining French Guyana. This study is being carried out under the supervision of dr. P. BURINGH, professor of
Another uncivilised Indian tribe are the Malayaimas. The author met one Malayaima Indian, who lived with a group of Akurios. As far as the author knows groups of Malayaimas have never been met by outsiders.

**FORMER CONTACTS WITH NOMADIC INDIANS IN SURINAM**

In 1937 Admiral C. C. Käyser met some nomadic Indians on the headwaters of the Oelemari river. Van Lynden published a short report of this contact in his paper: 'In search of the Southern border'. (3)

In 1938 Father Ahlbrinck met some similar Indians too, also at the upper Oelemari. The priest described his experiences in a detailed report entitled: 'In search of the Indians'. (1) The Indians encountered by Admiral Käyser and by Father Ahlbrinck belong to the same group. They were said to be Wamas. The priest also looked for Wajari Koele Indians, but he didn’t find them.

Thirty years later, in June 1968, a new contact with nomadic Indians was reported. Successively some Wayana Indians, a Frenchman – called André Cognat and the missionaries Schoen, Yohner and Ford met some unknown Indians near the Waramapan creek, an affluent of the Litani river. They called themselves Akurios. The Surinam papers of that time mentioned these contacts in bold type.

**IN SEARCH OF THE AKURIO INDIANS**

In September 1968 the author did pedological fieldwork on the headwaters of the Litani river. Seven Djukas and a Wayana Indian also formed part of the group. The following is taken from a diary made at that time.

We had just established our base camp on the bank of the Litani river, when we met Mr. Schoen and Mr. Leavitt, both American missionaries of the Surinam Interior Fellowship. It was rather surprising to meet people in such an inhospitable and isolated region. The missionaries were very pleased that they were able to borrow some gasoline.

tropical soil science at the Agricultural University in Wageningen, The Netherlands. The investigations are subsidized by the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO). – Ahlbrinck’s experiences resemble those of the author very closely. Diagrams of the Wama handcraft are identical to the articles the author brought back from his contact.
Expedition sketch-map with Oelemari airstrip, arrow cane area and location of base camp of the author.

1 Wamas, contacted by Father AHLBRINCK, 1938
2 Akurios contacted in June 1968 (ATULA group)
3 Akurios contacted by the author in September 1968 (ATULA group)
4 Akurios contacted in January / February 1969 (ATULA group, 4a, and ONORE group, 4b)
5 Akurios contacted in May / June 1969 (TUPITA group).

*Instead of 5 km read 50 km.*
The Americans were looking for Akurio Indians. Guided by a number of Trios and Wayanas they had been traversing the jungle for weeks. Indeed they contacted the same group of Akurios that they had met in June. Five Christian Trios were left behind with the Akurios to bring the gospel to them. The Trios were also instructed to cut a 'grondje' (plantation) in the jungle, hoping that the nomadic Akurios would settle in that very place.

A week later we met André Cognat and two Wayanas. Cognat is a French anthropologist, who has lived for years in a Wayana village on the Lawa river. André is a very striking personality: he only wears a red loincloth, like the Indians who accompany him and his long blond hair doesn't seem to have been cut for months. The Frenchman told me that he wanted to make a second attempt to take photographs of the Akurios. I was told that his camera had been damaged by the Akurios during the first contact. On that occasion the Akurios appeared very suspicious: bow and arrows were kept to hand. Nevertheless André managed to collect some artifacts. One must respect his courage.

In four days the Frenchman returned to our camp. We got very detailed information about the behaviour of the Akurios and about their place of abode. We heard that the Akurios were not far from our camp, nor were they very hostile.

Because of the information obtained I decided to go and look for the stone-age Akurios myself. The five Trios, left behind by the missionaries were still with them. The Trios could help us as interpreters, because their language resembles the Akurio language in some respects. Without the presence of the Trios I would never have started the expedition as I would have been quite unable to make myself understood.

Joko, one of my Djuka workmen, would serve as a bilingual intermediary as he speaks Nengre, the creole language of Surinam, and Trio.

Our expedition consisted of three Djukas, called Sibe, Joko and Bewani, our Wayana Oraimoekie and myself. My foreman and some sick people stayed in our base camp near the Koele Koele creek. My cook told everybody that the Akurios are giants, having faces like frogs. Moreover he was afraid that his penis would be removed from his body by the Akurios. That is why he preferred to stay in the camp.

On Friday September 27th we started our expedition with one
canoe. We were not far from the sources of the Litani and the river was very narrow. Upstream from the Waramapan creek the Litani was blocked by numerous fallen trees, that had been partially removed by the missionaries. We had to take care to prevent our 33 hp outboard motor from hitting a tree. After two hours we saw a kind of bridge, that had been nearly washed away by the river. The 'bridge' had been formed from a fallen tree that must have been cut by a stone axe. There was a hand rail, made of vine. This was clearly the place where the Akurios crossed the river! It was not easy to find the trail where the Akurios entered the jungle. The river banks were very swampy because of the heavy rains, but we found the path once more!

My workmen appeared to be very handy at making moetetes (back packs) of Pina palm leaf. We had to carry our own load and we walked for two hours thus, passing swamps and steep hills. Twigs, broken by the Akurios indicated that we were still on the right trail.

Suddenly we entered a camp that could not long have been abandoned. I saw nine huts of a very simple construction, consisting of sticks covered by palm leaves. A monkey skull had been strung up on a piece of vine, tied to a horizontal pole outside one of the huts. The teeth had all been removed and the brains seemed to have been eaten out. We decided to spend the night in this camp.

The Akurios could not have been far away, because we saw many fresh footprints on the path. Everybody was a little excited and some even got frightened, wondering what the next day would bring. The next day, September 28th, we saw a second camp after a walk of one hour. Smoke was rising, indicating that there were people in the camp! We hid our gun, because the Akurios are said to be afraid of fire arms.

Suddenly we saw the five Trios left behind by the missionaries. Another Indian was in their hut, who did not greet us in Trio fashion. He said nothing but 'koele' and this in a very penetrating voice. A second man appeared, also saying 'koele'. These must be the Stone-Age Indians! They came out of the camp to look at us. I counted 6 men, 6 women and 9 children. Among them were two old women, an old man and some babies. The other adults were roughly 20 to 30 years old.
ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE AKURIOS
We had scarcely put our loads on the ground, when some Akurio men turned our luggage upside down. They touched everything but they didn't steal anything. Obviously they expected presents to be distributed. At first the women stayed in their huts, but later on some of them appeared to be as curious as the men.

The Akurios were very interested in metal objects like machetes, knives, axes, files, plates and pans. They seemed to appreciate these things more than their own stone and wooden tools. Red cloth, like worn by the Trios and the Wayanas didn't interest these people very much.

We ourselves seemed to interest the Akurios as much as they did us. After having exchanged some presents of artifacts we were thoroughly inspected by the Akurio men. I seemed to be the most interesting object of attention. The Akurios tried to pull my beard from my face, but when they did not succeed in doing that they tried it on my workmen. Further we were touched all over and our shirts and trousers were looked into.

All this meant curiosity rather than hostility. There was one man, who did not want to meet us. When we tried to approach this man, he walked away, muttering all kinds of things. The next day the same man, called TUWATUWAPO, tried to talk to us. On that occasion he beat his chest and he continually pulled his bow. Obviously the man wanted to make an impression on us.

My Bush-Negro workmen were afraid of the Akurios. They remembered the numerous fights between the A洛克es and the Wajari Koeles in the past.

Thanks to the Trios we were invited to stay one day and one night with the Akurios. The Trios helped us to build a hut a little to one side of the Akurio camp. As soon as our hammocks were tied some Akurios lay down in them.

The Akurios were not bothered by my camera. Obviously they thought I was merely looking at them. One man put his finger into the lens when I tried to take a picture of him.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AKURIOS (See Plates 1–16)
The Akurios do not look like the other Indian tribes. Their skin is white, in contrast with the Trios and Wayanas, who are brown-skinned. This difference may be a result of their long stay in the jungle, where they are not exposed to the direct rays of the sun.
The Akurios are rather small, their noses are rather broad and their lips are relatively thick. Some of them have a strong Mongolian strain, more than can be observed in the Trios.

Their long black hair looks untidy. Their hair-style corresponds to that of the Trios. They cut their hair with bamboo knives, and they use simple wooden combs. In contrast with the Trios and Wayanas, their eyebrows and eyelashes are not removed. Most Akurios don’t wear a moustache or a beard, although I was told that there is one Akurio with such attributes. This man’s name was Tupita and he belongs to another group. (5)

On the arms of some men there are a number of scars and cuts that have been made by themselves. This is a way of keeping themselves from being lazy.

Generally speaking the people are in good health. Their teeth are markedly sound.

The people don’t use red paint like the Trios and the Wayanas, but they do use black paint.

The bodies of the Akurios are almost entirely naked. The women wear a simple apron (kwejoe), made of palm seeds. The men wear a belt of monkey-hair, tied to a very narrow loincloth of fiber. This cloth only covers the penis, the testicles hang freely and are exposed. Most people wear strings made of monkey-hair and fiber around ankles and knees.

Originally men and women decorated themselves with many strings of tooth necklaces. The teeth are from different monkeys, the wild pig, the jaguar and the cayman. The animals’ teeth are perforated with a sharpened incisor of an agouti (a rodent). The people combine the teeth with brown seeds of the Tassi palm.

During our visit many people had only bead necklaces, obtained in exchanges with Cognat and the missionaries. A young lady, called Irika, wore a bead apron. We had the impression that many Akurios hid their tooth necklaces, being afraid that we would take them.

WAY OF LIVING OF THE AKURIOS

The Akurios are nomads who live in the triangle formed by the Tapanahony river, the Lawa/Litani rivers and the Toemoek Hoemak mountains. They don’t use canoes like the other Indian tribes.

The people roam the country in family groups that contact each other occasionally. Yohner (5) reported in June 1969 that
he had seen 56 Akurios up to that day. There must be a lot of in-breeding in these groups. Mixed marriages and exchange of sex partners is common.

The people still live in the Stone Age. The stone ax is one of their most important tools. These axes are provided with a short handle and they are sharpened on certain rocks. (5) With their stone axes the Akurios make simple huts which are left after a few days or weeks.

Menstruating women are put in separate huts. The camps are always situated on the banks of creeks. The drive for food, fiber and arrow cane keeps the people on the move.

The Akurios sleep in hammocks, woven from the fiber of the Mauritia palm leaf. The model looks like a fishnet and differs from that of other Indian tribes in Surinam. Apparently the people have more hammocks than they need for their own use.

The Akurios defend themselves with their stone axes and with bows and arrows. The arrows are made from the cane of the Warimbo palm. YÖHNER (5) reports that there is an arrow-cane area on a creek off the western fork of the Oelemari river, called Sarapi. This area is visited occasionally by different Akurio groups in order to secure arrow cane. The people also know Kamaloea (planted arrow cane) that has probably been found in old plantations of the Wayanas or the Trios. The arrow tips consist of wood or bone. Wooden arrow points that have been dipped in poison (curare) can be removed from the arrow. These tips are used to shoot monkeys which are paralysed immediately. As a result the dying monkeys fall down, not being able any more to hold the trees with their tails.

Hunting is the task of the Akurio man. Often the men go out in the morning and return in the evening.

There is some taboo in the handling of raw meat. When the men bring in game, they drop it at the edge of the camp. Then the women go out to bring it in and clean it. (4) SCHÖEN reports that a missionary took a dead monkey over to one of the Akurio huts as a gift. The Akurio man scolded the missionary and took the monkey by the vine by which it was tied and put it over on the trash heap. His wife came later and prepared it.

The Akurios know how to make fire, using fans of palm leaf. They boil their meat all day and night in very thick clay pots, not eating it until the day after it has been shot. The clay pots are not marked as can be observed in other Indian pottery. The people also barbecue their meat so that it may keep longer.
Plate I. - Malaoni, an old Akurio woman. She belongs to the group of Atula, which was discovered in the jungle of southern Surinam in 1968. The same Indian tribe was contacted by Admiral Käyser and by Father Ahlbrinck in 1938. At that time the Akurio Indians were called Wamas.

[Photographs by Ir. M. W. H. de Boer, Arnhem, Sep. 1968.]
Plate 2. – An Akurio boy and a man who belongs to the tribe of the Malayaima Indians looking at a camp constructed by the author. Nobody showed any shyness or fear, nor did anybody show any hostile activity.
PLATE 3. - The Akurio diet mainly consists of palm nuts, meat and fish. Generally speaking the people are in good health. Their teeth are remarkably sound. The women are in general rather fat.
PLATE 4. - An Akurio boy attentively looking at the camera. Striking are the broad nose and the thick lips of this boy.
Plate 5. - Two nomadic Indians, called Amoka and Malaya. Amoka is an Akurio Indian who is said to be a witchdoctor. Malaya belongs to the Malayaima Indians who have not yet been contacted as a group. The Akurios are nomads. The search for food, fiber and arrow cane keeps them on the move. The men wear a belt of monkeyhair tied to a very narrow loincloth of fiber.
PLATE 6. – The Trio PESORO holds an Akurio child and a man, TUWATU-WAPO, who has a second name PONI. The Akurios were hesitant to reveal their real names. Many of them have several names.
Plate 7. - Tuwatuwapo removes lice from Irika. Irika wears a new bead apron decorated with nuts. She had thrown the original seed apron away.
Plate 8. — Two Akurio boys. The one on the right is called Okomoto. The Akurios do not make seats. They sit in their hammocks, on trees or on the ground.
Removing lice is a serious business for the Akurios. The man in the middle of the picture called Tuwatupapo did not want to talk with us on the first day. The second day of our visit he came over to our hut continuously beating his chest and pulling his bow. The reason for this was possibly the behaviour of his wife, Irika, who was very bold with us.
PLATE 10. — A young Akurio woman, called IRIKA. The original tooth-necklaces have already been replaced by beads obtained from missionaries.
Plate II. - Irika has a clear Mongolian strain. The Akurio skin is white in contrast to that of the Trios and the Wayanas who are brown-skinned.
PLATE 12. - MALAYA is said to be a Malayaima Indian. When Mr. YOHNER happened to see his stolen knife in MALAYA's basket, MALAYA got angry and told the missionary in sign language that he would cut his throat and would shoot him in the neck with an arrow.
Plate 13. - Amoka is not conscious of the fact that he is being photographed.
PLATE 14. - NARIYAUN, a young Akurio girl. The original seed apron has already been replaced by a loincloth in typical Trio and Wayana fashion.
PLATE 15. - The Akurio mother loves her child. There seems to be a shortage of female children, but there is no evidence that the people kill off the girls. The woman in the foreground is MOKOKO and her child is called WATISHINU.
PLATE 16. - IRIKA is the only Akurio girl who smiled.
Fish is caught with bow and arrow or by means of liana poison put into creeks. The use of fishing rods is unknown.

Palm nuts are the staple food of the Akurio diet. Their main food consists of Bugrumakka nuts which grow in clusters of about fifty. The people crack the nuts with a stone and chew them raw. They also grate the nuts on a rough rock, sometimes they boil them. The fruit of the Koemboe palm is also a delicacy, but that applies not only to the Akurios. Further the Akurios are very fond of wild honey, for which they have to chop holes in trees. The rest of their fare is made up of other jungle fruits and a few wild potatoes. (4)

Evidently the people don’t use salt. They appreciated cassave, which they didn’t know, but they were not interested in rice and biscuit which we offered to them. Apparently the people don’t use alcoholic drinks and they have no large containers. (5)

As far as could be observed the Akurios don’t dance. The people have no musical instruments, but they do have a number of chants. Some are happy songs (iwano) and some are spirit songs (wiri) due to fear. They fear the spirits of pigs, jaguars and other animals. (5)

The people like pets. ATULA has a Powisi (a big bird) and we are told that others tend pigs and turkeys.

The Akurio stories are more or less similar to those of the Wayanas and the Trios. When YOHNER asked an Akurio man: “Who is your creator?”, the man replied “Api”. “Who made the ground?”, the missionary asked, “It has always been,” he replied. “Who made the trees?” “Api” was the reply. “Api is just like us. He gave us food. Long ago there was no water. We had to drink our urine. Then Onopira (a small bird) flew down and found a tiny drop of water. He took the water in his beak and dragged it around on the ground and made the Makurutu (Loë creek), the Malaoni (Oelemari river) and other streams. Onopira made the water”.

DEPARTURE OF THE AKURIOS

The day after our arrival we returned to our base camp. The Akurios packed up and left too, but they went in the opposite direction, deeper into the jungle.

The women carried the back packs, which are woven from palm leaves. It didn’t take them long to break camp and to move on, because their possessions were very meager: a couple of clay pots, their hammocks, a few palm nut pods that are used as
plates, a sharpened stick for lifting meat out of the pot and some resin, which is burned for light at night. Even pieces of firewood were carried to the next camp. This wood can smoulder for hours and it can quickly be fanned into flame.

The men carried their bundles of arrows, their bows and their stone axes. Babies were carried on the back: the people simply made a bark sling and put it around the father's head and then around the babies' buttocks.

The five Christian Trios also left the Akurios, after having stayed some weeks with them. After some days we met them again in our base camp. They had cut a plantation for the Akurios, but the Akurios have never gone back to that same place.

**NEW CONTACTS WITH THE AKURIOS**

After the author's expedition, two new contacts with the Akurios have been made.

In February 1969 two groups of Akurios were contacted by the missionaries Leavitt and Yohner (4) and some government representatives. One of these groups, the group of Atula, had been contacted earlier, but the group of Onore had not previously been discovered. The Akurios were rendered fearful by the size of the expedition and showed some tendency towards hostility. A man called Malaya told Mr. Yohner that he would cut his throat and shoot him in the neck with an arrow. The expedition felt it wisest then to pull out! Three Akurios followed the expedition on their way back to the canoes. Later the Trios told the missionaries that these Akurios had intended to shoot the missionaries and the government men.

Notwithstanding instances of hostility a new expedition was equipped by the missionaries and the government in May 1969. Miraculously they met a new group of Akurios, the group of Tupita, including the leader of another group called Araipuku. These Akurios were very friendly. Their skin was slightly darker than that of the other groups, although still rather white. Their language seemed to differ slightly from that of the groups of Atula and Onore. Yohner heard fewer glottal stops among the group of Tupita.

Yohner reports that there are at least two groups of Akurios that have not yet been contacted, 'May be more' he says, 'for each time we contact a new group we hear of others.' The group of Iriki is reported to be upstream on the Oelemari; the group of Posowara could possibly be near the Pimba or Tutu creek.
REFERENCES


